

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan and proposed Critical Habitat

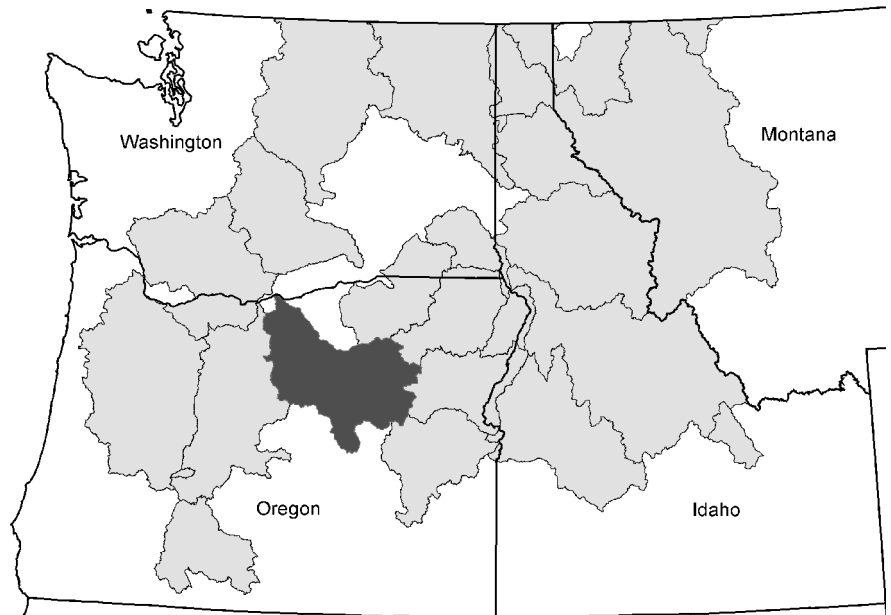
John Day River Recovery Unit (CHAPTER 9)

What areas are included in the John Day River Recovery Unit?

The entire John Day Basin is contained in this recovery unit; 8,200 square miles, including the John Day mainstem, the North, Middle and South forks of the John Day River. The 284-mile long John Day River is one of the longest free-flowing rivers in the continental United States. The John Day basin is located in northern Oregon and includes portions of Wheeler, Grant, and Umatilla counties and drains into the Columbia River. For purposes of recovery, one core area has been identified within this basin.

How much of the area is proposed as critical habitat?

A total of 648 miles of streams are proposed as critical habitat within this recovery unit. The proposed critical habitat area accounts for approximately 7 percent of the recovery unit. Proposed critical habitat includes 13 stream reaches (200 miles) in the mainstem John Day River, 27 stream reaches (300 miles) in the North Fork John Day River, and 11 stream reaches (148 miles) in the Middle Fork John Day River.



Who developed the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and critical habitat proposal?

The draft recovery plan for bull trout was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 local recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the draft recovery plans for each of the recovery units. These recovery unit teams included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and

the habitats they depend on for survival. The critical habitat proposal was based in large part on information developed by the recovery unit teams and supplemented with even more recent information on the current distribution and habitat characteristics of the species.

What is the relationship between the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the critical habitat proposal?

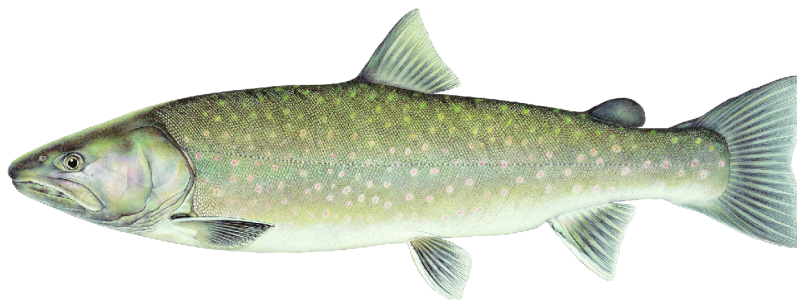
The draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical

habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint providing guidance for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.

Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of the actions necessary for the recovery of the species. Agencies, communities or individuals are encouraged to take voluntary actions described in the recovery plan to benefit bull trout.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, this is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-Federal entities, including private landowners, that may also be affected could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking Federal approval to discharge



effluent into the aquatic environment, or those seeking Federal funding to implement private property improvements, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been

designated as critical habitats. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-Federal entities when there is not a Federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business (not involving Federal funding, permitting, or authorization in order to occur) would not be affected.

How was the draft recovery plan for each unit developed?

Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species and considerations for paralleling existing State conservation and fisheries

management frameworks wherever possible. Recovery teams incorporated existing State conservation processes to the degree possible, depending on the degree to which they had been developed (for example, the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Plan, the State of Idaho's Bull Trout Conservation Plan, the State of Washington's Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon and the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds).

What is the status of bull trout in the John Day River Recovery Unit?

Bull trout were historically found throughout this basin but are now limited primarily to the headwaters of the North Fork and Middle Fork John Day Rivers and to the upper mainstem of the John Day River and its tributaries. Bull trout seasonally use the mainstem in the vicinity of Prairie City. The recovery team identified 12 local populations of bull trout in tributaries of the North Fork and Middle Fork John Day River and in the upper mainstem John Day River. Complete distribution is

undocumented, but seasonal use of the Columbia River by bull trout from the John Day River was likely.

What are the threats to bull trout in the John Day River Recovery Unit?

Altered hydrology and stream habitat conditions throughout the John Day River basin from past and present land use practices (forestry, mining, agriculture, and livestock grazing) have had the greatest effect on bull trout in this basin. Degraded fish habitat exists in about 600 miles of stream in the recovery area and includes high water temperatures from loss of riparian habitat and springs, chemical mine waste, excess fine sediment in pools and spawning areas, and channel instability and alteration. A reduction in anadromous populations (food base for bull trout) and competition and hybridization with brook trout has also affected bull trout in this recovery area.

What are the recovery goals and objectives?

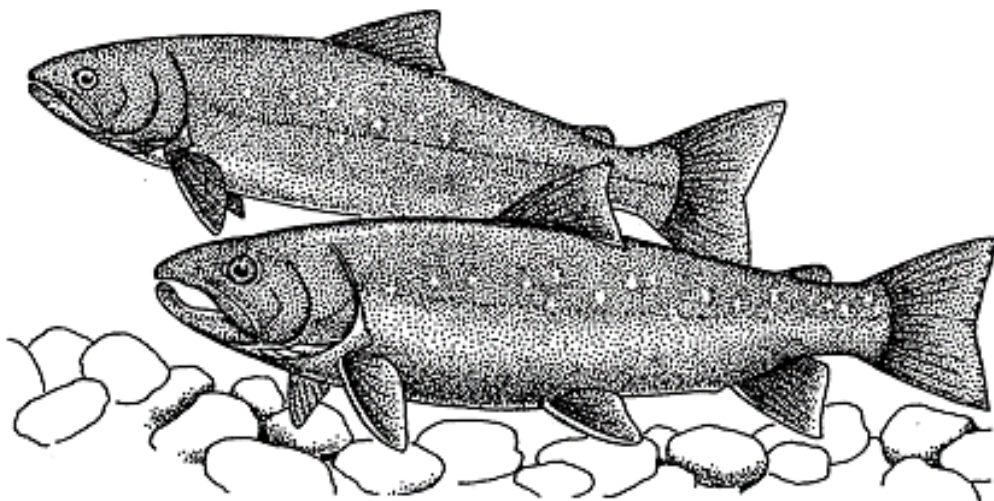
The goal of the bull trout recovery plan is to ensure the long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex interacting groups of bull trout distributed across the species' range so that the species can be de-listed. To recover bull trout in the John Day River Recovery Unit, the following objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout and restore distribution in previously occupied areas within the recovery unit.
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in adult bull trout abundance.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity and provide opportunity for genetic exchange.

What are the criteria for measuring recovery?

Recovery will be measured according to four criteria: distribution, abundance, population trends and connectivity in the John Day River Recovery Unit. The recovery plan includes specific, quantifiable standards for each of these criteria.

- **Distribution criteria** will be met when bull trout are found in 12 or more local populations in the John Day Recovery Unit.
- **Abundance criteria** will be met when the estimated number of adult bull trout is at least 5,000 individuals distributed in the John Day River Recovery Unit.
- **Trend criteria** will be met when adult bull trout exhibit stable or increasing trends in abundance over a period of at least 10 years in the recovery unit, as determined through contemporary and accepted abundance trend data analyses.
- **Connectivity criteria** will be met when specific barriers inhibiting recovery as listed in this recovery unit chapter are addressed.



What actions will be necessary to recover bull trout in the John Day River Unit?

Actions to recover bull trout in this unit generally consist of enhancing stream habitat and channel conditions, reducing stream temperatures, improving riparian habitat, restoring springs, and reducing chemical mine waste and excess fine sediment. A detailed list of actions is available in the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan, John Day River Recovery Unit, Chapter 9.

How long will recovery take?

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout in the John Day Recovery Unit. However, given our best estimate of what government agencies and others might do, it could take three to five bull trout generations (15 to 25 years) before identified threats to the species can be significantly reduced and bull trout can be considered eligible for delisting.

How much will recovery cost?

Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the John Day River Recovery Unit team has estimated that recovery could cost about \$25 million spread over 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal

governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on the estimated costs.

How can I obtain copies of the documents?

The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region's website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout>

How can I comment?

The Service will be accepting comments, beginning November 29, 2002, on its draft recovery plan for bull trout in the Columbia and Klamath river basins and in the St. Mary-Belly River Basin in Montana. Comments on the draft recovery plan will be accepted for 90 days, until February 27, 2003.

Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to: fwlsrbocomment@fws.gov

Beginning November 29, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will accept comments from the public on the agency's proposal to designate critical

habitat for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout.

Comments will be accepted for 60 days, until January 28, 2003. Comments on the critical habitat proposal may be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Office, attn: John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland Oregon 97232; faxed to 503.231.6243 or e-mailed to: R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov

In addition, a series of public meetings and public hearings will be held in January. Times and locations will be posted on our Bull Trout website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout> and publicized in local newspapers.

This is only a brief summary.

Please see full draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal for complete details.